

the largest plant of its type in the world. There may be one in Spain that may be a tiny bit bigger, but let's assume it is not. It is a huge plant. We have this going on all over Nevada as a result of the economic recovery package and tax incentives we give people to build green energy—clean energy jobs. That vast array in the middle of the desert, dotted by countless hard hats worn by people working very hard, was truly an impressive sight.

This afternoon at 5:30 we are going on to something extremely important, especially for people who have been struggling in America. We need to continue supporting projects such as, of course, the solar plant in Boulder City and continue moving toward a clean energy economy. They demand critical long-term investments and we have a long way to go. But there are additional things we can do right now this afternoon at 5:30 to help millions of hard-working Nevadans and Americans struggling to find work. These are not deadbeats; these are not bums; these are people who are out of work and have been out of work for a long time and have struggled to find a job. If we pass this emergency extension of unemployment and health benefits, we can give those unemployed families the help they need to put food on the table or go to the doctor.

Some on the other side flatly refuse to do so. To them it doesn't matter that these people lost their jobs through no fault of their own or that they are desperate to find a new full-time job and that this is an emergency, not only for our families but for our country. Many of those who oppose this extension voted to give tax breaks to rich chief executive officers who shipped American jobs overseas. Now that their constituents are trying to find jobs of their own, I hope they will consider giving them at least the short-term help they need and need critically. If Republicans continue blocking unemployment assistance, 1 million Americans will lose that lifeline by the end of this month.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

#### WEST VIRGINIA MINE DISASTER

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, while we were in recess, the people of West Virginia experienced a very difficult mine safety experience. Our neighbors in West Virginia, like Kentucky, are big coal producers. We have had our share, in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, over the years of mining disasters, and our hearts and prayers go out to our neighbors in West Virginia as they attempt to recover from the latest tragedy in what is obviously a very dangerous profession, and that is mining of coal.

#### POLISH TRAGEDY

We also witnessed a great tragedy overseas, the death of the Polish President Lech Kaczynski, his wife, and so many other Polish leaders over the weekend. This is obviously a terrible tragedy for Poland and a great loss for us as well. Poland is a great friend of the United States and we send our heartfelt condolences and every expression of solidarity to the Polish people and the families of the dead at this very difficult time.

#### LONG-TERM FISCAL SECURITY

Turning back to home now, I want to welcome everybody back. I hope everyone had a restful and productive break. My constituents have never been shy about sharing their views on what we are doing here in Washington. These past 2 weeks were no different. To be perfectly blunt: Kentuckians are concerned about the direction of our country. They are overwhelmingly opposed to the health spending bill, what it will cost, and the process used to pass it. And more generally, Kentuckians, and Americans everywhere, are concerned about the consequences of the endless borrowing and spending here in Washington.

Americans worry that we are on the cusp or maybe even past the cusp of a debt crisis. And they are frustrated. They don't understand how lawmakers in Washington can ignore this looming disaster after just narrowly averting the last one. Americans know that this is one crisis no bailout could ever prevent. We could borrow a trillion dollars to dig the country out of a mess that was created on Wall Street, but once the government maxes out its own credit card, there is nowhere to turn—except to the citizens themselves.

So the time to act is now. The deficit this year alone is projected to be more than \$1.4 trillion. Social Security recently started paying out more than it is taking in. Interest payments alone on the national debt are approaching \$1 trillion a year. Interest rates on mortgages, student loans, and small business loans are threatening to rise. There is no reason to think the problems we are seeing in Europe won't strike here at home if we do nothing to reverse current trends.

Those who continue to use the taxpayer credit card with reckless abandon threaten not only our chances of a quick recovery and the jobs it would create but also the nation's long-term fiscal security—and a safety net that has been built up over the decades precisely for moments like this. Democrats can no longer hide behind the argument of good intentions when the results threaten our very stability as a nation.

We must get a handle on the deficit and the debt. This is the issue that will focus our attention in the weeks and months ahead. And over the coming weeks, I assure you, Republicans will continue to give our colleagues across the aisle and our President the opportunity to live up to the President's

commitment on February 13: "Now, Congress will have to pay for what it spends, just like everybody else." Americans will not tolerate another crisis of Washington's making.

#### SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Another issue we will be focused on, of course, is the Supreme Court. Justice Stevens' decision last week to retire from the Court gives us another opportunity to discuss the proper role of our Federal courts and our Constitution.

Last year, during the debate over Justice Sotomayor's nomination, Americans saw the Senate debate and discuss the President's "empathy" standard for judicial appointments. At the end of that debate, most Americans—and indeed Justice Sotomayor herself, along with Senators of the President's own party—rejected that standard and agreed with Republicans that judges ought to apply the law, not their own feelings and personal preferences.

We are hopeful that this time around the President will select someone with extensive real-world legal experience and a demonstrated commitment to the rule of law. That is what Americans expect from their judges, whether it is small claims court or the Supreme Court. They do not expect us to select judges based upon whose side the judge is on, as one Democrat on the Judiciary Committee once suggested.

Once the President submits his nominee, Senate Republicans will diligently review his or her record so the American people can be confident that they will be able to fulfill the judicial oath; namely, to administer "justice without respect to persons and to do right by the poor and by the rich." I am hopeful that at the end of the day, I and other Republicans will be convinced that the nominee will be able to do so.

I yield the floor.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. There will now be a period of morning business until 3 p.m., with time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Illinois.

#### EXPRESSING SORROW TO WEST VIRGINIA AND POLAND

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I join my colleagues in expressing my sorrow to the families of West Virginia for the coal miners who were lost in that disaster. Illinois is a coal mining State. Throughout our history we have had terrible mine disasters and the loss of